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Babysitting Emery

I was babysitting my granddaughter last month and I was feeding her cereal and gave her a spoonful of water. She tasted it like it was the most delicious elixir. She was almost 5 months old and you’re not supposed to give them water yet because they don’t need it. Immediately I started laughing so hard that tears were running down my cheeks. I could not help it and right there were those two angelical bright eyes looking at me and smiling back. I kept laughing thinking about how many times my mom did the same to my kids when they were babies disregarding all my perfect rules. I was trying to be the perfect mother who follows every advice that expert books say about parenting and take it to the extreme. Since I was a young girl, my secret Cinderella fantasy became me. Those fantasies about perfection became my real stories. I wanted to be perfect at every single thing! I had the idea that being perfect would bring me the perfect happy ending. I was a bit of a loner as a child and young woman and that was not a problem for me. I guess it was hard for other kids to play with the always clean and proper girl. Now that I look back I know that they could not keep up with me and probably they did not have the desire to do so. But when one is playing perfect, those kinds of attitudes are the “things we don’t want to know,” as Evan Eisenberg and Jeffrey Fisher state in their Essay *There are* *Know Knowns; there are things we know we know.*

The years continued for me. Life was getting steeper and steeper and my perfection was emptying my spirit, the real me, hiding it because I was so afraid that the true me was not the right type of perfection. I constantly argued with my mother, especially about my kids and the way I was raising them. I thought my way was the correct way and she had to follow my rules. I was not open to listen. Oh my! Years and years of perfection with no room for failing were corroding me, taking my energy. I used to wake up in the morning very tired. My perfection mode seemed to be taking all my power and maybe I was simply surrendering to its negative effects? Harder and harder, lower and lower and lonely, but perfect. My inner self was empty. I was carrying my heavy luggage in my soul. I cannot agree more with the author of the bestseller novel Anna Quindlen. She writes *in Being Perfect,* “Even the illusion of perfection requires an enormous amount of work. I can tell you that by the end of the day of trying to be perfect. I was exhausted as if I’d done the whole thing as a fast clip of running shoes.” I was trapped and acting the same as Quindlen exhorts, “oh, how I wanted to lay my burden down.” I’ve lost the most important person in my life, myself and, honestly, I was weak, tired and bleeding from my soul. I got to the point I felt paralyze and convinced I had to do something. I needed to take a different path to stop being perfect. How? Was it as easy and quick as going to sleep at night and waking up the next morning without my heavy backpack? I had no idea.

Now, in a new personal perspective, I do believe what Eisenberg and Fisher claim in their essay, “Things we didn’t know we knew.” I can assure, by my own experience, that there are things life made us know, because life, in every aspect, is a learning process sometimes in a hard way.

Finally, I had the courage; the one I thought I did not possess, to finally take a stand for myself and stop trying to be perfect and start being me. I fell in love with me and my starting place was my ethnic South American way. Now with renewed conscience I am happy to follow what my heart tells me, and I get through life with the peace I found inside me. I am glad I am not following an agenda as I take every day as it is, a new opportunity to learn. I was lucky enough to have my mother, the beautiful wise woman I didn’t see back in the time I was perfect. I was able to ask her about the time before me, when she was growing up, when she started her family, raised her kids, about her endless love for my father. I spent more time with her, just listening to her with no judgment. Before long, my chance to know her was going to be gone. She was getting weak because of her sick lungs. I gave myself the gift to enjoy her for who she was and for the first time in my life. Now I am so glad I spoke with my heart. I became a true daughter to her. I will never have to worry that my mom did not know how much I admired and loved her.

Last month with my granddaughter, I experienced one of those aha moments in my life. My laugh was because at that very moment, once more, I really understood my mother. I wasted so much precious time in my race of being perfect, but at the same time I realized that my experiences made me who I am now. I laughed so hard because, even when she is not physically here, she must be laughing too, with me and, she was right. I finally became a grandma to understand her and her words have sense to me. I wanted to be perfect so bad, and maybe in some areas I succeed, but deep in my spirit I felt the heavy emptiness of the lonely perfection and it was painful. I heard that voice inside me that was screaming at me to take another path and I learned the joy of not being perfect but just being me. I am at peace now and I am not afraid to make mistakes. I am open to learn what other lessons life is bringing.

Works Cited

# Works Cited

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